2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

842 thers wash such clothes and wear them again right after delivery—and they have a lot more babies now than they used to have, too."

[163] Coming Daylight said that formerly most women had only two or three children,—at most five,—and that some had none at all. Yet in the "old days" the population was large. Singer mentioned that although a man with several wives might have one as favorite, this would not make any difference. Each wife would have one or two children; no one of them would have a great many.[1]

These two old women, and our older men informants as well, were firmly convinced that "medicinal" contraceptives accounted for the small families. The old woman said: "Lots of women took medicine. There are roots for that [contraception]. Women who do not want children say, as an excuse, that one cannot keep things in order if there are children about. Not everybody had this kind of medicine, and one had to pay a high price for it—sometimes two or three horses. If a man were the owner of this type of medicine, he might demand in payment one of the other wives of the husband who obtained the medicine from him. If you take this kind of medicine you have to abide by certain rules. You must not let anyone who has children wear your robe; never sit on the bare ground; never hold an infant; don't sit on anyone's else bedding; above all, don't have intercourse with anyone other than your husband. If you break any of these rules you will conceive right away."

To illustrate this point, one woman told about her cousin's wife who had taken medicine to prevent her having children. While [837] her husband was away, she "threw in" with another man and became pregnant. Some women hesitated to take this kind of medicine because if a woman then became pregnant her husband would suspect infidelity, even though the wife had remained chaste but had "broken one of the other rules." Singer said that she would

[145] [1] This is confirmed by Denig, who was among the northern plains tribes for 20 years and was himself married to an Assiniboine. He makes the following observations, p. 513: (1) Not more than two out of five children live till youth is passed; (2) two to five children is the average and seven or eight of rare occurrence; (3) a woman is old at 35 and seldom healthy, menopause occurs at 40 or earlier, the usual period of child-bearing is 18 to 35, although a few start bearing at 15.

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NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

ioned doll which he wrapped up like a sack-baby and, one night without letting her know what he was doing, he raised up the covers on his third wife's bed and put this doll under her. He did the same with the Assiniboine woman and said: 'She will have a boy, too.' As he had predicted, each bore him a son, and these two are the only children Crow Bull had. He later gave this doll to one of his niece's daughters, having 'sterilized' the doll first, however, so that the girl was not affected and subsequently gave birth to five children."

Natural sterility was apparently not recognized by the Gros Ventres. If a couple was childless it was assumed that contraceptive medicines were used. While many individuals did not approve of the use of these medicines, each family had the right to do as it pleased in this matter without outside interference. Nevertheless, The Boy, alarmed at the falling birthrate which he attributed to the widespread use of these old-fashioned medicines, on two occasions in 1921 and 1922 spoke out boldly in public about the matter. He feels he was justified in doing so since he thinks there has been an improvement in the situation.

Although the use of these medicines was rated by our informants as the major factor in accounting for the small number of children per family, infant mortality was said to have been high, and infanticide was known.

For premature infants nothing could be done in the days before hospital care was known. Furthermore, where marked physical defects were obvious at birth, the chances that the infant would live were slight. It was stated, for instance, in regard to one woman who gave birth to a "little dog," that "had she been alone she would have done away with it, but her husband prevented her from doing so and everybody thought it was awful." Coming Daylight and Singer knew of two other actual instances of deformity,—one child who "looked like a beaver," and another who had "ears like a rabbit"—and both of these died shortly after birth. Coming Daylight remarked: "It seems as though we are so foolish the way we are ashamed of being deformed. One time when we were in town a white woman, whose face was quite disfigured, came into a restaurant where we were. My daughter told me: 'They [the whites] don't think anything of it. It can't be